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# CONFERENCE *connection*

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SOUTHEAST CONFERENCE, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

December 15, 2022

## From the Conference Minister

by Rev. Kim Wood

*All earth is waiting to see the Promised One,  
and open furrows await the seed of God.  
All the world, bound and struggling, seeks true liberty;  
it cries out for justice and searches for the truth.*

"Toda La Tierra"/"All Earth Is Waiting"

Alberto Taule, translated by Gertrude C. Suppe

What are you waiting for in these Advent days? What are you expecting? What are you seeking? What have you been questioning for which you are awaiting answers? What are you hoping for in this season of preparation?

It seems as if the earth is groaning under the weight of all the waiting that is being done. We're waiting for the pandemic to end, even as we have recently coined the phrase "triple-demic" to describe the rising threat of this season's medical trifecta – Covid-19, RSV, and the Flu. We're waiting for the violence to end, even as the reports of mass shootings, gun violence, theft, destruction, and war are mounting. We're waiting for legislation to protect beloved who are in harm's way, changes in legislation that is causing harm, courts to make decisions that are just and equitable, and lawmakers to work together to the benefit of all people and all of creation. We're waiting for strikes to end, jobs to come, test results and treatment plans, birth and death, family to arrive, flights to take us home, the weather to change, and the weather to stop changing. We're



waiting...and waiting...and waiting.

Yes, all of earth is waiting. And, sometimes, we allow the waiting to bring life to a grinding halt. Not that pausing is always a bad thing. Sometimes, we need to take a breath and re-assess our direction. But when waiting puts us into a stagnant slumber or draws us away from engaging in life, it can become dangerous, detrimental, and even destructive.

Advent is a powerful reminder that waiting does not need to be a passive process but instead can be a time of active anticipation. Wrote the great preacher, teacher, activist, and mystic Rev. Dr. Howard Thurmon in his meditation, "Waiting is a Window":

*"Waiting is a window opening on many landscapes... It is the experience of recovering balance when catapulted from one's place. It is the quiet forming of a pattern of recollection in which there is called into focus the fragmentary values from myriad encounters of many kinds in a lifetime of living."*

(from "Waiting is A Window" in *The Inward Journey*, pp. 81-82)

How do you find yourself waiting as this Advent Season leans toward a celebration of massive proportions as we revisit the birth of the Christ Child? Are you engaged? Are you stuck? Is the weight of waiting overwhelming you?

Remember, we are bound together in our waiting. God has bound us together and invited us to engage eagerly so that justice and liberty might become a reality. What an honor it is to have God present with us in this waiting!

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## Advent Week 3 Meditation





## News from the Conference Office

### Your Generosity At Work

Thank you for all the ways you have participated in the ministry of the Southeast Conference in 2022! Without your generosity of time, talent, and treasure, the Southeast Conference could not provide the necessary resources for our collective ministry. With your participation, we can support our congregations and ministry settings, our clergy and lay leaders, our Members in Discernment (MIDs), and Persons in Exploration (PIEs) to create, sustain, and expand our collective vital ministries that change lives and raise the voice of the welcoming, affirming love of God through Jesus Christ in the South.

Did you know that:

- A \$100 gift helps fund a visit to one of our local churches to provide leadership development and strategic planning support
- \$250 covers one third of a Member in Discernment's (MID) psychological evaluation, part of the process of preparing new ministers to serve

- A \$300 gift pays for the two Zoom accounts that make it possible for us to communicate and connect with Search and Call committees, clergy small groups, and to provide webinars and training opportunities
- \$500 helps the Southeast Conference to be present when a disaster or injustice strikes a community
- A \$1,000 donation pays for healthcare insurance for one of our full-time employees for a month

These are just a few ways that your gifts to the Friends of the Southeast Conference Fund make it possible for us to minister together as Jesus' disciples in times such as these. Every donation is significant and impacts how we are the church now and moving forward in this pandemic-informed world. Whether you make a one-time donation or set up a recurring monthly payment, your gift will make a difference. Please help us end 2022 strong and ready for the new year.

**GIVE TODAY!**

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## From the Generosity Coordinator

*by Min. Carrole Moss*

Blessings of the season, HAPPY HOLIDAYS!!

No matter your religion or belief, I send you blessings, prayers and ALL things beautiful in this season.

"Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners-of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I show mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his immense patience as an example those who who would believe in him and receive eternal life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory, forever and forever." To God be the glory, forever and ever, AMEN!



This has been a year of faith, a year of fear and a year of uncertainty. Our faith has been tested, our beliefs challenged, our health challenged, yet we preserved on, in times of challenges, we made it thru. We served others, we

helped our neighbors around the world, and we are STILL STANDING!! I and the SECUCC are so very excited to be a part of that process... thank you ALL for all the ways you made this happen. ❤️

None of the work that we, the SECUCC did, could be done without YOU! We understand that it has been a sacrificial year and we are so very grateful that you continued to support this cause. We thank GOD you and all that you do! We pray the blessings of GOD in 2023 as we continue with this much needed work! Praying for peace, healing, health and everything that GOD has in store for you.

I'm looking forward to be with you all in 2023..it's gonna be a very GREAT year. THANK YOY FOR ALL THE WAYS YOU CARE AND SERVE. Let's come back energized, renewed and ready to name a difference in 2023!!

Love, peace and blessings  
HAPPY HOLIDAYS,

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## Financial Books Closing Date is January 9

As we approach the end of 2022, please note that the Conference Books for Our Church's Wider Mission and other special offerings **will close on January 9, 2023**. All offerings, including Christmas Fund donations, must be **received** by the Conference office by January 9, 2023, for them to count towards your church's 2022 giving. All donations received after January 9, 2023, will go towards your church's 2023 giving.

We have to set this date early in the month because of when the Conference's reporting is due to the National UCC for 2022. If you have any questions or concerns, please email Heather at [hfosburgh@secucc.org](mailto:hfosburgh@secucc.org) or call 404-719-6572.

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## Yearbook and Annual Information Review

It is that time of year again! Yearbook Reporting and Annual Information Review will be beginning at the end of the month. Please be on the lookout for emails to church leadership about Yearbook Reporting after Christmas. All Authorized Ministers will also be receiving an email with information about how to complete their Annual Information Review. If your or your church's email has changed in the last year, please reach out to Heather at [hfosburgh@secucc.org](mailto:hfosburgh@secucc.org) with the new email address we should be contacting you on.



## Ecclesiastical Council for Elliot Trojanowski

The Commission on Ministry of the Southeast Conference of the United Church of Christ invites you to the Ecclesiastical Council for Elliot Trojanowski on January 19, 2023 at 7:30 pm Eastern/6:30 pm Central on Zoom. [You can register here to attend.](#)

Elliot (they/them) is currently serving as a chaplain resident in the NICU at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta. They are a recent Columbia Theological Seminary graduate and have been a member of Kirkwood UCC since 2018.



### Prayer List

We are continuing the process of praying for authorized ministers, congregations, and ministry groups throughout 2022. We encourage you to include these prayer requests in your local church newsletter, share them with your prayer circle, and include them in your own prayers.

#### Week of December 18

- Pleasant Hill Community Church; Pleasant Hill, Tennessee

- Tiffany Gibson Cox
- Eddie Colf
- Andrew Kim
- Nelson Kittle
- William Wilson Jr

### Week of December 25

- Kirkwood UCC; Atlanta, GA
- Presbyterian - UCC Student Center, U of GA, Athens, GA
- Jennifer Crane
- Sarah Kim
- Karl Whiteman
- Herbert J. Carey
- Tricia Lytle

### **Churches in Transition**

First Congregational, Savannah GA; Trinity Congregational, Athens AL; Holy Trinity Community Church, Nashville TN; First United Church, Belvidere TN; Pleasant Hill Community Church, Pleasant Hill TN; Deer Lodge Congregational Church, Deer Lodge TN; Brookemeade Congregational, Nashville TN; Rush Memorial, Atlanta GA; Sandy Creek, Lafayette AL; First Congregational Christian, Montgomery AL

## **News from the Wider Church**



## The Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund

**Suggested offering date December 18, 2022**

The Christmas Fund has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, and Christmas "Thank You" gift checks each December to our lower-income retirees. United Church of Christ congregations and members have blessed the Christmas Fund with their generosity for many years. This year, your care and compassion will be especially appreciated by those servants of the church who are facing a time of need. Thank you!

[Download promotional materials from the Pension Boards website](#)

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## 2023 Stewardship Webinars

The wider setting of the UCC is offering the following stewardship webinars in 2023.

- Jan. 25 – 3 Best Practices: Set a New Year's Resolution for Increasing Giving
- Mar 22 - Changing Landscape of Giving: What we can learn from Millennial and Gen Z Donors
- Apr 26 – Rethinking What God Calls Volunteers to Do
- May 24 - Building an Endowment
- Jul 26 - Discover Your Why: How a Clear Purpose Strengthens Evangelism, Giving, and Impact
- Aug 23 – Narrative Budgets: Telling your Story by the Numbers
- Sept. 27 - 5 Ways to Make an Impact: Understanding the Hopes of Our Donors to Create Change
- Oct 25 – Donors Who Don't Come to Church: Engaging Donors Outside of Sunday Morning

Learn more: <https://www.ucc.org/stewardship/learning-opportunities/>

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## Thursdays in Black Prayers 2022

Global Ministries invited leaders in both the UCC and Disciples to share prayers for Thursdays in Black every Thursday from October 6 through December 29, 2022. Thursdays in Black is a global movement for a world without rape and violence. As such, these prayers may include mentions of violence, particularly sexual violence. You can view these prayers online: <https://vimeo.com/showcase/9892884>.

## News from our Local Congregations



### Volunteers from Pleasant Hill Church Visit Back Bay Mission

by Mary Ruth

"If you have never been on a mission trip and think you don't have the skills or ability or energy or enough people, do think again!" says Barbara Smith

of Pleasant Hill Community Church in Pleasant Hill, TN. She was one of 9 missionaries who experienced a fabulous week of education and service (Nov 13-19) at Back Bay Mission (BBM) in Biloxi MS and discovered there is much to do and more to learn about poverty and unsheltered/marginalized communities.

At a "Conversations With..." presentation on Dec 8 at Pleasant Hill where missionaries shared highlights of their trip experiences, mission trip co-leader Mary Ruth said "if you only ever go on one mission trip, this is the one for you. It is the 'Cadillac' of all mission trips because of its 100 years of experience, energetic and enthusiastic staff, and an outstanding reputation in the Gulf Coast area."

Each missionary paid \$250 for 6 overnights and program expenses. On Nov 13 gave Back Bay Mission a check for \$2,700. Other expenses were \$111 for background checks, \$300 for groceries to feed nine missionaries for one week, \$200 worth of fresh items to the BBM Client Choice food pantry, and \$39 for BBM Micah Day Center peanut butter nabs for unsheltered community members. The group carpooled for the 500-mile drive, and delivered a trunk load of coffee for use at the Micah Day Center which was donated by members of Pleasant Hill Community Church, and on the return trip, some stopped in Montgomery to experience The National Memorial for Peace and Justice.

To find out more about bringing a group to Back Bay Mission in Biloxi MS ([www.thebackbaymission.org](http://www.thebackbaymission.org)), you may request a copy of 'how to plan a BBM Mission Trip', which includes month-by-month planning tips by contacting BBM at [volunteercoordinator@thebackbaymission.org](mailto:volunteercoordinator@thebackbaymission.org). It's important to sign up for a specific week about a year in advance, as many groups return year after year.

## Trainings, Conferences & Events



## 2023 Winter Youth Retreat

It is TIME! Winter Youth Retreat 2023 is happening! The Blowing Rock Conference Center welcomes youth from all around the southeast for a weekend of storytelling, experiential education, service, and of course, fun in the snow on January 13-16, 2023.

Our programming will include the duo Alatheia, winners of numerous acoustic music and songwriting awards, who takes stories from their own lives and weaves them into music that's instantly relatable. Rooted in the Appalachian Mountains, Alatheia (Mandee Radford Langley and Cristi Johnson) create and perform original and traditional music in what they call Front-Porch-style, using eclectic instruments, thick modern harmonies, and engaging storytelling of life on the road, taking cues from nature, their families, and neighbors along the way.

Registration is already underway, and we encourage you to make your plans now. Visit <https://brccenter.org/winter-youth-retreat-2/> to learn more and secure your group's place today!

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## Small-Town and Rural Church National Gathering

The Coalition for UCC Rural Ministries presents *Nourishing the Seeds of Faith*, a virtual national gathering of rural and small-town churches & ministries in the United Church of Christ. Save the dates: February 9-11, 2023. Registration is to open in January 2023. Hosted by faith education, innovation & formation (faith info), a Justice and Local Church Ministry of the UCC. For more information, contact Rev. Roberto Ochoa at [ochoar@ucc.org](mailto:ochoar@ucc.org).

## Conference Calendar



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December 20 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EST

[Clergy Conversations via Zoom](#)

December 22 @ 6:00 pm - 7:00 pm EST

[Commission on Ministry Meeting](#)

December 24, 2022 - January 3, 2023

[Christmas Holiday – Conference Office Closed](#)

January 3, 2023 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EST

[Clergy Conversations via Zoom](#)

January 9, 2023

[Financial Books Closing for 2022](#)

January 10, 2023 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EST

[Clergy Conversations via Zoom](#)

January 12, 2023 @ 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm EST

[Board of Directors Meeting](#)

January 17, 2023 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EST

[Clergy Conversations via Zoom](#)

January 19, 2023 @ 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm EST

[Live Harp Meditations for Ministers](#)

January 19, 2023 @ 6:00 pm - 7:00 pm EST

[Commission on Ministry Meeting](#)

January 19, 2023 @ 7:30 pm - 9:00 pm EST

[Ecclesiastical Council for Elliot Trojanowski](#)

View the full calendar of events online: <https://www.secucc.org/events/>

## Contact Us

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